'It's huge!'

Texarkana welcomes its biggest store ever

By CARMEN JONES-MOSLEY
Of the Gazette Staff

Shoppers, start your engines.

Silver shopping carts were lined up like cars at a race track Wednesday as shoppers prepared to enter the new Wal-Mart Supercenter, 4000 New Boston Road.

The biggest store to ever open its doors in Texarkana greeted eager shoppers, browsers and just-plain-curious folks with lots of hoopla and fanfare.

The store covers 250,000 square feet of shopping space with nine specialty shops, groceries and of course, Wal-Mart.

Women with men in tow, children sitting and riding in buggies, people of all ages and sizes parked their vehicles and streamed into the newest store in the area. Wal-Mart associates had the store ready and waiting.

Two-week-old Angel was all dressed up in pink lace and bows for the grand opening. "We have been waiting and waiting," said Stacy Franklin, of Hooks, Texas. "This is her first visit to a Wal-Mart Supercenter."

Angel was sleeping peacefully, undisturbed by the festivities around her.

Connie Keasler from Red Lick, Texas, said, "It's huge! It goes as far as the eye can see. This is great for our community."

Mildred Surratt from Linden, Texas, said, "We got up at 6 a.m., but we had to just read the paper and wait until the store opened at 9 a.m. We have been ready to shop but we are not looking for anything in particular. We just wanted to look."

Ann Roberts from Texarkana, Ark., was trying to console her son Justin, who didn't want to be shopping so early. She said, "I'm impatient and he doesn't want to be here. I didn't even know this store was here. I just heard about it opening from someone who called me this morning."

Erma Geiger from Lockesburg, Ark., got up early to see what the new store was all about. "I just came out to see what it was," she said.

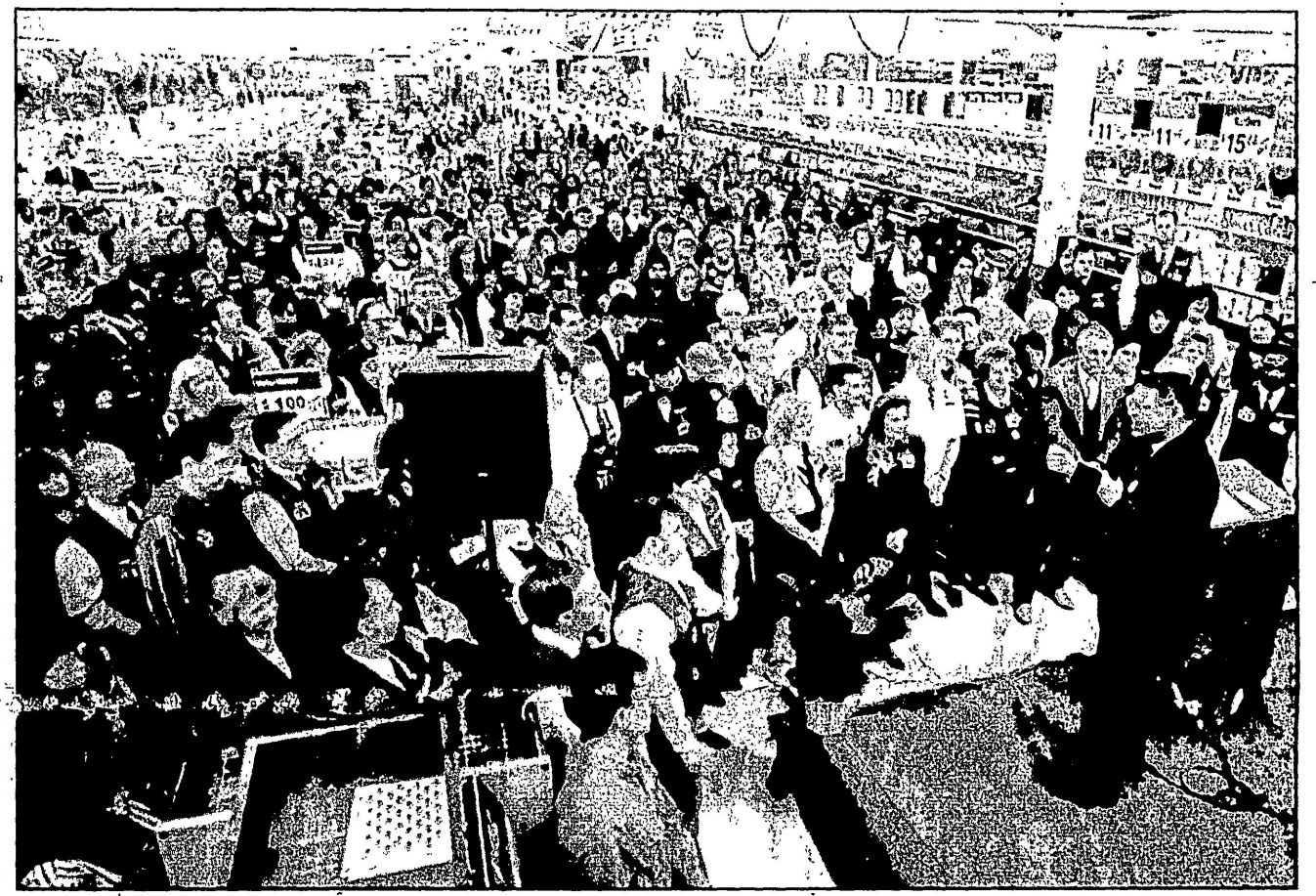
Stephanie Rone from Texarkana, Texas, said, "I was just nosy and curious. They advertised that this is the biggest store and they even gave us a map of the store when we walked in so we won't get lost. This is great!"

Mickie Balof from Texarkana, Texas, and Sarah Jones from Texarkana, Ark., said they were afraid they would miss something if they didn't come out for the opening. "We will shop here instead of in Mount Pleasant (Texas) from now on," they said.

Lauren, 2, just wanted to know, "Where's da rabbit?"

SUPER FACTS

- The new Wal-Mart Supercenter created 530 new jobs for Texarkana and the surrounding area.
- When the new store opened, Wal-Mart became the fourth-largest employer in the Texarkana area. Wal-Mart is the nation's second-largest employer.
- The new store covers 250,000 square feet of shopping space under one roof.
- The Supercenter holds a pharmacy, vision center, lube express, Fantastic Sam's, lawn and garden, fresh bakery, fax and copy center, photo shoot and a McDonald's restaurant.
- The store is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Staff photo by ROBERT T. COLEMAN

Paul Carter, chief financial officer of Wal-Mart, addresses associates and customers just before the Wednesday morning opening of the new Wal-Mart Supercenter in Texarkana, Texas.